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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 TEL AVIV 001951

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

NEA FOR BURNS/SATTERFIELD  
NEA/SA/EX FOR AUSTIN-FERGUSON; DEPT FOR DS/IP/NEA;  
DEPT FOR DS/IP/ITA; DRL FOR A/S CRANER;  
NSC FOR ABRAMS/DANIN;  
USAID FOR DCHA, DCHA/FPP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [CASC](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [GZ](#)

SUBJECT: THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND MARCH 31, 2004 --  
(1300 HOURS LOCAL) -- PALESTINIANS CLASH WITH POLICE AS  
SETTLERS MOVE INTO HOUSES IN EAST JERUSALEM NEIGHBORHOOD

THIS IS A JOINT MESSAGE FROM EMBASSY TEL AVIV AND CONGEN  
JERUSALEM.

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: In the pre-dawn hours March 31, settlers moved into 11 houses they claim to have purchased in the predominantly Arab Silwan section of East Jerusalem, sparking clashes between police and Palestinian residents, who reportedly threw stones at the settlers. Police used tear gas to disperse crowds of angry Palestinians near the site, according to Israeli press reports (see Jerusalem septel). Also in the West Bank, a roadside charge exploded March 30 near an IDF jeep traveling on Route 60 near Al Khader village, south of Bethlehem. No one was injured. In Gaza, two Palestinians were killed March 31 near Khan Yunis when IDF soldiers opened fire on them as they were spotted approaching the soldiers' outpost. An 11-year-old child was hit in the arm by stray fire March 29 during an exchange of fire between Palestinian gunmen and IDF soldiers stationed near the Egyptian border. End Summary.

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West Bank  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Death: Nil.

-- Injury: Nil.

-- Shooting: Palestinian sources claimed an IDF soldier was wounded in Bethlehem by Palestinian gunfire March 30, but this attack was unconfirmed.

-- Shooting: Palestinians mounted two shooting attacks at IDF positions near Bayt Sahour March 30, but caused no injuries.

-- Bomb: A roadside charge exploded March 30 near an IDF jeep traveling on Route 60 near Al Khader village, south of Bethlehem. No one was injured.

[1](#)3. (SBU) ARRESTS:

-- The IDF arrested 11 Palestinians around the West Bank March 30.

[1](#)4. (SBU) DEMONSTRATIONS:

-- The IDF used to tear gas to break up a Land Day demonstration in Janin March 30.

[1](#)5. (SBU) SEPARATION BARRIER:

-- The IDF dispersed anti-barrier demonstrators March 30 near the village of Bayt Liqya. More demonstrations were planned for March 31 near Qatanna.

[1](#)6. (SBU) SETTLEMENT EVACUATION/EXPANSION:

-- The IDF removed a rudimentary structure March 31 at a site near Kiryat Arba known as Hazon David. Later in the day, Israeli media reported clashes near the site, as border police and IDF units tried to prevent settler activists from demonstrating at the site (Details reported Jerusalem septel).

-- In the pre-dawn hours March 31, Jewish settlers moved into 11 houses they claim to have purchased in the predominantly Arab Silwan section of East Jerusalem, sparking clashes between police and Palestinian residents, who reportedly threw stones at the settlers. Police used tear gas to disperse crowds of angry Palestinians near the site,

according to Israeli press reports. (Details reported Jerusalem septel).

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Gaza  
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**17. (SBU) ATTACKS:**

-- Deaths: The IDF reported that two Palestinians were killed March 31 near Neve Dekalim when IDF soldiers opened fire on them as they were spotted crawling towards the soldiers' outpost.

-- Injuries: UNRWA reported that an 11-year-old child was hit in the arm by stray gunfire March 29 during an exchange of fire between Palestinian gunmen and IDF soldiers stationed near the Egyptian border.

-- Mortars/Rockets/Hand Grenades: One mortar was fired at IDF soldiers south of Netzarim March 30, and three mortars were fired at Neve Dekalim March 31, according to the IDF. The IDF also reported that one anti-tank missile was fired at an IDF outpost west of Nissanit, and one Qassam rocket was fired at Nahal Oz kibbutz March 30. No injuries were reported in any of these attacks.

-- Shootings: The IDF reported one shooting attack near Nahal Oz Crossing March 30, and one near Karni Crossing March 31.

**18. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS/CHECKPOINTS:**

-- Route Four (Salahadeen Road), the main north-south traffic artery, was open for Palestinians.

-- Erez Crossing was closed to Palestinian laborers March 31, but was open for merchants age 28 years and older. The number of merchants crossing March 31 was not available. The IDF also allowed diplomats in vehicles and internationals on foot to cross. UN agencies, however, refuse to authorize their non-diplomatic staff to cross on foot; staff must therefore wait to cross until they can join someone crossing in a diplomatic vehicle. The Erez Industrial Zone was open March 31, but the number of laborers entering the Zone was unavailable.

-- Sufa Crossing was closed for Palestinian laborers March 31, but open for the import into Gaza of aggregates used in construction.

-- Karni Terminal was partially open March 31 for the import and export of goods into the Gaza Strip. Unpacked goods may enter, but no Palestinian containers may enter or exit.

-- Rafah Terminal was open March 31 for Palestinian travelers, although Palestinians reported only limited numbers were being allowed to cross.

-- Tel al-Sultan and Toufah checkpoints were closed March 31.

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Israel  
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**19. (SBU) ATTACKS**

-- The IDF reported that Molotov cocktails were thrown at Israeli Border Police officers north of Kafr Kanna village the evening of March 30 (see "Political Developments" below).

**10. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS**

-- At the Likud Party Convention March 30, PM Sharon promised to hold a referendum among registered Likud party members on his plan for unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip (see Tel Aviv septel).

-- Approximately 15,000 people participated in the main demonstration March 30 commemorating the 28th anniversary of Land Day in the village of Arraba. Also on March 30, several thousand protesters participated in a march in Kafr Kanna to commemorate the death of village residents in the riots that occurred there in October 2000, at the start of the current Intifada.

-- Israeli media reported March 30 that a commission of inquiry into the March 14 double suicide bombing at Ashdod port found that security guards at Gaza's Karni Crossing had failed to follow proper procedure and thoroughly examine the container by which it is believed the bombers reached Ashdod. Guards at Ashdod were absolved of any wrongdoing.

-- Jewish terror suspect Eliron Golan was charged March 30 with the attempted murder of Israeli Arab MK Issam Makhoul and three other people in the Haifa area. According to press

reports, Golan was accused of making and setting several bombs targeting Israeli Arabs in the Haifa area over several years. Golan was quoted as saying that his intent had not been to harm Israeli Arabs in general, but rather to target those whom he felt were endangering Israel's security.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/telaviv>

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KURTZER